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## LIBERAL CALVINISM; THE REMONSTRANTS AT THE SYNOD OF DORT IN 1618

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IN spite of all the volumes written about the Synod of Dort, one looks in vain for a comparison between the condemned Remonstrants and Calvin, either in doctrine or in those other distinguishing features of the Calvinism that flowed from Calvin and Geneva, and formed the working program among Huguenots, Dutch, Scotch, English, and the descendants of all four in the American colonies.

It is easy to assume that the judgment of the Synod of Dort, representative of so many Calvinistic churches and countries, must be accepted as definitive, and that the deposed Remonstrants cannot be considered Orthodox or Calvinists. The next step is usually to regard the Remonstrants as anti-calvinists and to classify them tidily under the labels 'Arminian,' 'Socinian,' 'Arian,' 'Semi-pelagian,' or 'Papist,' or even sometimes untidily by applying all these names together to some opponent, as was done to Grotius.

Whether this method is logical and historical will appear more clearly after a study of (1) the Dutch conditions and parties which caused the Synod; (2) the Calvinism of Calvin and his immediate followers; (3) the progress and outcome of the Synod.

### I

The Synod of Dort was called by the States General of the Netherlands in 1618 to aid in settling the disputes, not merely theological but personal and political, that had been going on for more than ten years. The doctrinal dispute at the Uni-

versity of Leyden between the older and rigidly conservative Gomar and his younger, more liberal colleague Arminius had a strong element of personal rivalry, which did not cease with the death of Arminius. Grotius and Barneveldt and the Remonstrants (that is, those who remonstrated in 1610 against the ultra-dogmatic Calvinists), supporting a policy of peace with Spain and a republican and limited central government, were the political opponents of Maurice, Prince of Orange, and the Contra-remonstrants ("Orthodox"), who favored a more war-like policy and a strong central government under the House of Orange.

The Synod included twenty-six noted divines from the "Reformed," that is Calvinistic, churches of Geneva, Switzerland, England, the Palatinate, Hesse, Emden, Nassau, and Bremen. From the Netherlands came not merely fifty-eight pastors or professors but also a "political president" and eighteen secular commissioners representing Prince Maurice and the States General. This political element constantly exercised a decisive influence, which was regularly used against the Remonstrants. The representatives of the Remonstrants were cited by the civil power, not for discussion of their doctrine, but for defence, and only under prescriptions which, they felt, violated their rights of conscience. Like Athanasius at the Synod of Tyre, the Remonstrant delegates elected from Utrecht found that the members of the Synod were not judges but parties, and they therefore withdrew. Even the one Remonstrant who expressed his willingness to accept the drastic conditions laid down by the Synod was not given his seat.

From the history of events preceding the Synod, from the composition of the Dutch delegation, and from the reports of foreign delegates it is quite clear that the assembly was from the start practically committed to the condemnation of the Remonstrants. This was the conclusion of such observers as "the ever memorable John Hales," Dean of Windsor, and Balcanqual, James I's Scottish chaplain, both of whom came favorably disposed to the dominant party and distinctly critical toward the Remonstrants. They were, indeed, selected and instructed by King James, who had strongly urged upon the

Dutch the prosecution of the Remonstrants. The facts recorded day by day, in letters or official records, and the conclusions eventually reached by such competent observers with no suspicion of bias for the condemned Remonstrants, show a growing recognition of the severe and unfair tactics on the part of Gomar, of the Moderator of the Synod, and likewise of the secular commissioners representing the States General. The observers note unfair methods of citing the Remonstrants' writings; disregard of any opinion in the Synod favorable to the Remonstrants; and insistence upon summary action without debate in compliance with the decree of dismissal written out by the secular commissioners "before they came into the Synod," which Balcanqual calls "a trick a little too palpable." Both observers record their regret that the Synod was in other ways inadvertently giving clear evidence that the condemnation of the Remonstrants had been predetermined. A like well-considered conclusion was reached, a generation later, by Lewis Du Moulin, Puritan and orthodox Calvinist, Camden Professor of History at Oxford. Du Moulin discriminately points out that the sincerity of the Contra-remonstrants at Dort is not to be questioned, and that they voted as they thought and not as they were bid by the States General; but they were only permitted to be there at all because they were on the side of the dominant party in the State, which always controls the composition of such a Synod and might in this case have made it an Arminian Synod had the States General themselves been Arminian.<sup>1</sup>

The logical corollaries of the Synod's deposition of the Remonstrant ministers were the ratification by the States General of the Synod's acts; the execution of Barneveldt, the Remonstrant political leader, four days after the close of the Synod; the condemnation of Grotius five days later; and the banishment of the Remonstrant ministers and teachers from the Netherlands. Upon the share which politics had in the deposition and banishment of the Remonstrants further light is shed by the fact that a few years later, after the death of their political opponent Maurice and the accession of a less hostile prince,

<sup>1</sup> *Paraenesis ad Aedificatores Imperii in Imperio*, 1656, ch. xxiii, paragraph 7, p. 624.

the Remonstrant preachers and professors were allowed to return and establish not merely churches but a Remonstrant theological seminary. Whatever doubt may lie in anyone's mind as to the precise amount of political influence involved in both the controversy and its decision, there can be no doubt that this influence was present and effective before, during, and after the Synod. It is also clear that Gomar, leader of the Contra-remonstrants, was over quick to extend the strong personal animosity he had earlier felt against Arminius to any brother, orthodox or heterodox, who ventured to differ from him in the Synod. The British delegates record Gomar's discourtesy not only to the Remonstrants and the foreign delegates but even to his own Contra-remonstrant members, one of whom he twice challenged to a duel during the progress of the Synod.<sup>2</sup>

As one follows the story it becomes increasingly clear that even in the matter of doctrine, partisanship and extraneous considerations must be recognized. Doctrine, however, fundamentally important though it be, is but a single phase of Calvinism. It is necessary, therefore, before considering the doctrinal controversies at Dort and attempting to answer the question who were the Calvinists there, to define Calvinism.

## II

The answer to the question what was Calvinism is again easy if one follows the line of least resistance and uses the old hard and fast system of classification based upon a rigid interpretation of a single article or a single aspect of Calvinism. The single article would usually be assumed to be double predestination. The single aspect of Calvinism would be the theological. Predestination, however, whether single or double, was but one article of Calvin's profound theology. It was demonstrably neither primary nor fundamental in his doctrine.

In the first edition of the *Institutes* there is no double predestination, but only the ordinary doctrine of predestination

<sup>2</sup> 'Letters from the Synod of Dort,' in Hales's *Golden Remains*, 10-11; further examples of partisanship of Contra-remonstrants, 2, 4, 33, 35, 36, 57-61. Cf. Bayle, *Dictionary*, art. 'Gomar.'

of the elect. In the first creed of Calvin, drawn up for Geneva in 1537, predestination was not even mentioned; and Calvin never demanded any other creed. There was no discussion of predestination in connection with his exile or in the conditions for his triumphant recall. The Catechism of Calvin, in its revised and permanent form the official teaching of the Genevan church, contained no section devoted to predestination, and mentioned it only in connection with the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." This is interpreted as meaning: "That He would govern His own by His Spirit, that He would prostrate and destroy the reprobate *who refuse to give themselves up to His service*, thus making it manifest that nothing is able to resist His might." The omission of any section devoted to predestination is clearly intentional, for such a section teaching double predestination had been included in the first edition of the Catechism. The omission of double predestination in the definitive editions of the Catechism and in four creeds from Calvin's hand clearly demonstrates his mature judgment that double predestination was not fundamental, and was unnecessary in a church's symbol of belief.<sup>3</sup>

This permanent expression of Calvinism in the official Catechism of Geneva, translated into ten languages, published in scores of editions, adopted or built upon by French, Scotch, English, and Dutch, and approved by the Synod of Dort, shows the fundamental principle, the keynote traceable throughout the theory and practice not only of Calvin but of his followers, conservative or liberal. That fundamental thing was not predestination, but the absolute sovereignty of God and the subordination of all else to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. Calvin's first edition of the Institutes, his widely accepted Catechism, the Creeds drawn up by him and solemnly adopted and given symbolical authority in the sixteenth century by the Calvinistic churches in France, Switzer-

<sup>3</sup> Calvini Opera, ed. Baum, Cunitz, Reuss, v, 346. Catechism of 1537, xxii, 46-47; Catechism of 1538, v, 346; later editions, vi, 95; 1537 Creed, ix, 693-700; cf. especially Articles 6-8, 11-12, on Faith and Redemption through Christ, and the italicized clause above, with the Remonstrants' Articles I and III. Three other creeds: for French King, Opera, ix, 715 f., for Genevan students, 1559, ix, 725 f.; for Emperor, 756 f.

land, Holland, the Palatinate, England, and Scotland were in essential harmony with the Remonstrants, who accepted the Calvinistic creeds taught in the Netherlands and adopted by the Synod of Dort. In the Scots' Confession of 1560, drawn by the fiery John Knox who had sat at Calvin's feet in Geneva, "there was no statement of reprobation, or in the second Helvetic Confession of 1566," "whose authors were decidedly Calvinistic and its doctrine undoubtedly Calvinistic."<sup>4</sup> "The Thirty-Nine Articles, the Heidelberg Catechism [approved by the Synod of Dort], and other German Reformed Confessions indorse merely the positive part of the election of believers, and are wisely silent concerning the doctrine of reprobation."<sup>5</sup> Yet these creeds were recognized and accepted as Calvinistic by Calvinists of both the extreme and the moderate types in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; for it should be remembered that the Puritans of two continents and two centuries repeatedly expressed their agreement with the doctrines of the Church of England as expressed in the Thirty-Nine Articles, and that this agreement was confirmed by the testimony of the highest Anglican ecclesiastical authorities in the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth century.

Double predestination has been doubly overworked as a too convenient earmark of Calvinism, first by the enemies and secondly by the supporters of rigid Calvinism, both of whom might take a lesson from the simpler Calvinism of Calvin, of Knox, and of the national creeds of their day, in which double predestination does not appear.

The one principle always present and emphasized by Calvin and his immediate followers in every creed and working program was the sovereignty of the Almighty, the Eternal, whose kingdom men must pray and work to help bring about on earth, whose "Word of God" must be realized as the law of earthly kingdoms. There is no need to reproduce here the evidence for that fact. It has been the conclusion of men for two generations who have had first-hand familiarity with Cal-

<sup>4</sup> Cunningham, *Reformers*, 203; Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, iii, 445 (Scottish), 252-254, ch. x (Helvetic).

<sup>5</sup> Schaff, *Creeds*, i, 454.

vin's writings and life: the Genevese Choisy, the French Doumergue, the Dutch Kuyper, the American Williston Walker, the Scotch Reyburn, the English Irwin, the Germans from Köstlin half a century ago to Scheibe (even in a book devoted to Calvin's predestination), and recently Beyerhaus, who shows by scores of examples that what is fundamental is the sovereignty of God. This fundamental conviction deemed worth fighting for was put in simple concrete form by the citizens of Geneva, who disdained the threats of their former sovereign of Savoy and sent him word: "For the sovereignty of God and the Word of God we will hazard our lives."

When Calvin did discuss double predestination most fully, he warned against the danger of presumption in speculation as to what God had ordained before creation, and urged the sufficiency of Scripture teaching on this subject and the recognition of the general principle that "God governs everything by His Providence."<sup>6</sup>

More essential than any question about predestination or any purely theological article in judging whether a man or group is Calvinistic or not, is the fact that creed was only one aspect of Calvinism. There were at least five phases or aspects of historic Calvinism, all logically knit together: (1) a creed based on the Bible and emphasizing the absolute sovereignty of God; (2) church government and discipline of morals in conformity with the Word of God, honoring God above men, and enforcing the standard of his Word in daily life; (3) a form of worship free from idolatries forbidden in Scripture, yet dignified, and flexible enough to meet the test of "edification" of various kinds of people in various lands and times; (4) civil government, harmonizing with the will of God and fundamental law, safeguarding the liberties of the people protected by covenant and by divinely ordained representative government; (5) insistence upon a comprehensive, practical, social and economic program as part of the working out of the will of God, a sort of practical idealism or spirit of insisting on putting theory into practice in daily life.

This comprehensiveness of the Calvinism of Calvin is strik-

<sup>6</sup> Opera, viii, 100-111, 115.



ingly evidenced in the documents in the archives of Geneva, a frontier market-town, which was made over by the wars for independence and by Calvinism from a city of merchants into an international centre, the first Puritan commonwealth devoted to gainful vocations pursued for public purposes. In 1537 the document submitted by Calvin and his colleagues to the city council was significant of his program and spirit. The resulting creed of 1537, which made no mention of predestination, logically linked together the sovereignty of God and the moral obligations of man. One element of Puritanism appears in its requirement that all citizens should swear to observe the Ten Commandments, and in its recognition that wastefulness, drunkenness, and shiftlessness are violations of God's law. In worship, Calvin developed more heartiness through congregational singing, urging the training of a children's choir to lead until their elders could learn to follow, and later securing poets and musicians to write both words and music. Church organization was demanded, with practical plans for church officials devoted to moral discipline. Civil government was touched upon in insistence upon a joint commission of clergy and laity to revise the marriage laws and to remedy injustices of the canon law.

In 1538, and again in 1541, what Calvin regarded as essential was indicated in the conditions upon which he insisted before he would return to Geneva. These included the reorganization of the church government and the safeguarding of its rights against political tyranny; measures for right relations between civil government and church; purity and freedom of worship; provision for moral discipline and sound morality.

The reorganization of state as well as church was part of Calvin's concern, and he collaborated in the revision of the civil code of Geneva in 1543. That other famous Genevan, Rousseau, in his *Social Contract*, reveals an understanding of the scope of Calvin's work. "Those who consider Calvin only as theologian fail to recognise the breadth of his genius. The editing of our wise laws, in which he had a large share, does him as much honor as his *Institutes*. Whatever revolution time may bring in our religion, so long as the love of country

and liberty is not extinct among us, the memory of this man will be held in reverence."

In the Genevan archives memoranda in Calvin's hand still exist regarding improvement in military defence, fire protection, police regulations, sewers, and weaving. There was no mention of hell-fire in Calvin's Genevan creed, but when there came up a practical question of a new scheme of central heating, it was to "M. Calvin" that the doubtful magistrates turned for advice. A picture at once official, contemporary, and concrete of the actual workings of Calvinism in the first Puritan commonwealth is to be found in the "Lawes and Statutes of Geneva," containing both civil and ecclesiastical codes, translated by an English refugee in 1562, and reprinted in England at the beginning of the Civil War and on the eve of the Restoration.

The wide range of Calvin's program in Geneva is reflected in the records of the local, provincial, and national church assemblies — all representative, and all with laymen on an equality and usually in the majority — of the Huguenots, Scotch, Irish, and Dutch; of the parishes and town corporations, of church-wardens and overseers of the poor in a score of towns in East Anglia from which came the settlers of the towns of New England, and of parliaments in Puritan England; of church, town, or vestry meetings and "General Courts" in colonial New England or Virginia; and in the educational and economic policy manifested by all these people.

In general, from the absolute sovereignty of God over all men Calvinism deduced the moral obligation of all men to society, and a consequent devotion to production and public service as part of the service of God. Two examples will illustrate this. Calvin's epoch-making teaching that interest-taking was lawful and that "ydle money is altogether unprofitable," quoted, translated, and applied by his followers, and reinforced by his teaching of "calling," resulted in the extension of credit in the great Calvinistic trading peoples, Scotch, English, Dutch, and American colonists, and in their enormously increased economic power of production. It was illustrated more fully in the teachings regarding Sunday and "calling." Man must not

merely rest on Sunday, but must do so in order that he may, like the Master-workman ("*ce grand Ouvrier*," Institutes, I, v, 10), work six days in the week, and "do all his work" in "that estate and calling to which it shall please thee to ordain me," where, "however humble his calling, each man can make his best contribution to the Kingdom of God." Boys and girls brought up on such prayers from Calvin's Catechism become social assets rather than social liabilities. On going to work they were taught to pray: "May we faithfully follow our estate and calling in pursuit of thy ordinance rather than in satisfaction of our ambition to enrich ourselves; yet if it shall please thee to make our labour to prosper, grant us the good-will to come to the aid of those in want, according to the power which thou hast given us." <sup>7</sup>

Whether one reads such vocational prayers of Calvin or the actual Lawes and Statutes of Geneva, providing that no one should lose his time but everyone work six days in the week according to his calling; or the homely teachings of his Genevan colleague Cordier; or the educational programs of Geneva, Holland, Scotland, the Huguenots, or the Calvinists of New England; the wise counsels of Richard Baxter in his "Christian Directory"; or the shrewd and oft-reprinted saws of Richard Steele's "Tradesman's Calling" or "Religious Tradesman" — in all these and many other like examples will be found a systematic program for everyday practical, social, and economic productivity. In his daily social and economic life, as in his religion and politics, the Calvinist was a driver, a dynamic force, militant and masculine, insistently and persistently making himself not a Mohammedan witness of fate, nor a passive Lutheran contemplator of the work of the Holy Spirit, but rather an active human agent of the divine purpose running through the ages.

Trained thus in the larger aspects of Calvinism, in the meeting-house on Sunday and at the weekly lecture; daily for six days in the week at bench, shop, farm, or loom; in the school-house, on the training-field, in the hôtel de ville or town-hall of Geneva, old Boston, or Amsterdam, or in the town-meeting

<sup>7</sup> Calvin, Catechism, Opera, vi, 138.

of the newer Boston, or agitating for a town-meeting in New Amsterdam, infected by that "New England disease which is very catching"—the Calvinist of all these lands was a man whose conception of Christian citizenship involved a development of all his productive powers for the benefit not merely of church but also of commonwealth. He not only paid his bills, but produced something, put it at interest like a canny Scot or thrifty Yankee, and gave generously for public purposes. "Christianity is a busy trade," wrote the Puritan Richard Sibbes. "It is stupid to feel in oneself the power to do something well," said the Huguenot Mornay, "and not to seek means of doing it." An unknown correspondent of the Huguenot-Dutch-Puritan Lewis Du Moulin, Locke's teacher at Oxford, wrote that he would not neglect to put out at usury the talent which he had received from Du Moulin's book. If ever peoples exemplified in their lives the parable of putting their talent out at usury in both spiritual and material life it was the Huguenots, Scotch, English, Dutch, and their American descendants, the Puritans of two worlds. All these types of Calvinists "regarde also what may be expedient for the commonwealth," as the Scot Spottiswoode translated in 1616 Calvin's letter on the lawfulness of taking interest. Calvinists were everywhere more than theologians; they were founders of states which crystallized into practical, working institutions the progressive teachings of Calvinism, social, economic, political, as well as those relating to doctrine, worship, and church government. Their passionately active and persistent spirit reveals itself not merely in a remarkable body of international literature to be found in virtually every American colonial library of the seventeenth century, Puritan or Anglican, Scotch, Dutch, or Huguenot, but more concretely in an international movement of common purpose and common practice in two continents for over two hundred years.

This historic movement reveals Calvinism as much more than a creed. It was, as Kuyper called it, a "life-system," but something more, for it possessed within itself the dynamic of life, vitalizing creed, worship, moral and intellectual discipline, church organization and civil government, economics and social

ethics, developing and utilizing to the utmost God-given talents for the upbuilding of church, free public schools, military defence, and the wealth necessary for so comprehensive and costly a commonwealth. In a word, this historic movement meant public-mindedness, systematic and practical, where every man should bear his appointed part in the realization upon earth of the changeless purpose of Him whom the Calvinist was so fond of calling "the Eternal." "Calvinism's essence was the moralization of life through religion." Calvin's "lifelong aim and business were to re-wed religion and morality," is the summing up of one of the most recent writers, who recognizes that Calvinism was neither predestination nor even "essentially a systematic body of doctrine."<sup>8</sup>

There was something else not quite so concretely and easily definable in Calvin and his followers: a fearless spirit of re-examination of premises, a logic so thorough-going that it seems characteristic rather of the French than of the ordinary English-speaking people, but yet a quality that appears in English-speaking people of a certain type, the Puritans. This spirit may be described as that of taking the next step. Calvin not only said, "We must walk each according to his station," but also, "We must walk forward, and grow, so that our hearts may be capable of things we cannot now understand. If our last day finds us going forward, we shall learn beyond this world what we could not learn here."<sup>9</sup> This not merely forward-looking but forward-moving spirit made Calvinism a growing, questioning force, bound to pass beyond any temporary creed, form of worship, or government, whether of church or state, because it always pursued Truth, "God's oldest daughter," as the Huguenot Condé described it. "The desire for investigating truth," Calvin taught, "has been implanted in the human mind." The truth should be told even if it hurt some who cannot comprehend it; for it is better "that he that can comprehend may do so, rather than not to tell the

<sup>8</sup> Hunter, *Teaching of Calvinism*, ch. xvi. Cf. Choisy's valuable contributions: *La théocratie à Genève au temps de Calvin*; and his *L'État chrétien calviniste à Genève au temps de Bèze*.

<sup>9</sup> Farewell to Genevan Magistrates, *Opera*, ix, 890; *Institutes*, III, xxi, 2.

truth and thereby not only prevent both persons from comprehending but also make the more intelligent of the two become worse, whereas, if he had learned and comprehended, others might learn through him.”<sup>10</sup> “How fearful is their estate who even seem to fly from knowledge,” said Baynes, the first link in that remarkable chain of conversion to Puritanism — Baynes, Sibbes, John Cotton, and John Davenport. “God hath not stinted us to any certain degree of knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> The Puritan John Goodwin, in his defence of the execution of Charles I, held it a Christian duty “to make new patterns for others to follow”; “to enquire where others are defective”; “to remedy this by diligence in enquiry after truth.” “To oppose as error all not generally received, is to interdict growth.”

Once we realize the range of Calvinism, we escape being caught in the fine meshes of those who would set up an artificial standard, not merely exclusively theological but based on a single article of creed. In 1618, unfortunately, those who could not accept the rigid scholastic definitions of Dort on five points of speculative theology, although they agreed with all other aspects of Calvinism and even with the existing Calvinistic creeds, were rejected as not Calvinists, and were called Arminians, a term very indiscriminately used, often merely indicating an objectionable sort of person from the point of view of the speaker. It was a term of reproach, first because Arminianism had been condemned at Dort in the most widely attended international assembly of Calvinists, secondly, because in England Arminianism was condemned by Puritans and parliamentary men as savoring of the autocratic political and religious tendencies of Laud and Charles I, who in fact held views in both religion and politics quite contrary to the liberal and republican Remonstrants, or Arminians, of 1618.

The Remonstrants' views are found in their five points or articles of 1610; their interpretations in 1618 of these articles which were reaffirmed at Dort; the Confession in Dutch and Latin, 1621–22, drawn up by Episcopius, their spokesman at Dort; Episcopius' *Theologicae Institutiones*; and the *Theologia*

<sup>10</sup> *Institutes*, II, ii, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Baynes, *Commentaries on Ephesians*, ch. i, 16–18.

*Christiana* of their later leader Limborch, 1686. These official documents and teachings of the recognized leaders of the Remonstrants show that on occasion, and particularly after their exile, they were ready to criticize their persecutors and censors with some Calvinistic militancy. It is, however, somewhat surprising and illuminating to find that the Remonstrants' own utterances show them to have been on the whole in accord with Calvinism not only in worship, church government, political, social, and economic program, but also in the theology of the Calvinistic creeds and catechisms before the Synod of Dort. Like Calvin the Remonstrants emphasized the sovereignty of God and the supreme duty of men to serve as instruments in carrying out his will as manifested in the Word of God. Their tenets on the sacraments, communion, and worship were regarded as essentially correct even by their severe censors, the Leyden professors, in 1630. Perhaps most surprising of all, we find the Remonstrants, from Arminius to Limborch, explicitly and repeatedly declaring their belief in double predestination, and accepting the statement of predestination embodied in the Calvinistic creed and catechism of the Dutch church. Like Calvin, however, they were not afraid to revise in the light of the Word of God (the supreme test), and for the honor of God. Arminius and his ally Uytenbogaert (who drew up the famous five Remonstrant articles of 1610) were trained at Geneva, where they received the liberal as well as orthodox tendencies, especially under the teachings of the liberal Perrot, who taught them theology and presided over the students' discussion of theses. This Genevan pastor and teacher Perrot gave to Uytenbogaert, before he left Geneva for the Netherlands, this significant advice: "Never assist in condemning any for not agreeing in every point of religion with the established church, so long as they adhere to the fundamentals of Christianity," a counsel which we shall see advocated by the Remonstrants in Holland, by John Locke — product of Puritan, Huguenot, and Remonstrant — and eventually carried out by liberal Calvinists in Holland, England, and America.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Brandt, *The History of the Reformation in the Netherlands*, II, 72; Borgeaud, *Histoire de l'Université de Genève*, I, 58-59.



Arminius himself in his earlier years was given hearty approval by Beza, under whom he studied in Geneva. In later life he was accustomed to recommend Calvin's Institutes, Commentaries, and Catechism as "incomparable in interpretation of Scripture." Even in his controversy with his precisian antagonist Gomar, Arminius testified "how well Calvin and Beza treated the doctrine of predestination."<sup>13</sup>

Both Grotius and Episcopius state that the Remonstrants' article on predestination (Article I of the five articles of 1610) was accepted at first by both sides. It was certainly legalized in the Province of Holland. After the discussion of 1611 at the Hague, the Estates of Holland gave the victory to neither Remonstrant nor Contra-remonstrant, but resolved that the five articles of the Remonstrants should remain as before.<sup>14</sup> The view of predestination condemned by the Synod of Dort, as in so many other points, was not exactly what the Remonstrants declared to be their belief, but what was either put into their mouths or twisted from what they said, contrary to "plain grammar," as the Scotch delegate Balcanqual repeatedly noted in his letters. We can see this for ourselves by comparing the Remonstrants' own written and signed statement of belief of 1610 and 1618 with the errors rejected by the Synod of Dort. Indeed the Contra-remonstrants carried the practice so far that in one citation of Scripture they inserted (in brackets, it is true) a phrase not drawn from the Bible, in their zeal to prove the Remonstrants themselves unscriptural: "He hath chosen us [not because we were but] that we should be holy."<sup>15</sup> In this same article the orthodox Synod condemns the doctrine of election "founded upon foreseen faith," although "foreseen" had not been used by the Remonstrants in their articles. In the fifth article the Synod condemns the teaching that "true believers who are regenerate (*vere fideles ac regeneritos*) can fall into mortal sin"; but the Remonstrants in this article had not used the word "regenerate" but only "true believers." It is

<sup>13</sup> Works, Nichols edition, I, 295-296; III, 656.

<sup>14</sup> Brandt, II, 211-213.

<sup>15</sup> Epistle to the Ephesians, 1, 4; under Article 1, section ix; Schaff, Creeds, III, 554, 583; same in official Acta Synodi by authority of States General, 1620, p. 28.



not safe to take as the Remonstrants' belief what the Synod condemned.

It is only fair, however, to indicate that the Remonstrants did make predestination conditional in the sense that election depended upon faith in Christ, and reprobation upon unbelief. It should be pointed out that even in this their purpose was Calvinistic, for they expressly sought to preserve the honor and justice of God, so that he might not be regarded as condemning men "without any intervention of sin," "without any regard to unbelief," but rather "through their own fault," an expression used by Calvin himself.<sup>16</sup>

The Remonstrants were likewise Calvinistic in their purpose to make both election and reprobation subserve the moral life in man, and in their sound but strikingly frank assertion that "all men without exception are bound to believe that they are elected to salvation" (Article V, vi, 3).<sup>16a</sup> This belief that they were predestined agents of God, held by both Remonstrants and Contra-remonstrants, was no small factor in their courage in fighting Spain, and in their stubbornness in fighting one another.

From both the official records and the letters of delegates it is entirely clear that the dispute at Dort was not over the acceptance of double predestination. Both sides accepted this; but it was the Remonstrants who vainly urged the discussion of reprobation, maintained that this tended to the glory of God no less than election, and cited Calvin as an example to justify treating the two sides of predestination.<sup>17</sup> In the reports of the sessions, private and public, contained in the letters from the British delegates, Calvin is referred to not in discussions of predestination but in those on the resistibility of grace,

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Remonstrants' Articles I, iv, viii, and Articles III-IV, v, with Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xxiii, 9; III, xxiv, 12: "None perish without deserving it." The Remonstrants' Five Articles, 1610, in Schaff's *Creeeds*, III, 545-549, in Dutch, Latin, and English; summarized (with the five negative articles not given by Schaff) in Brandt, II, 74-75; the interpretation of the articles by Remonstrants at Dort, Brandt, III, 83-84, 87-89, 89-90, 90-94; *Acta Synodi*, I, 127-137; *Acta . . . Remonstrantium*, I, 71-83.

<sup>16a</sup> Samuel Sewall held the same view: "'Twas sin for any one to conclude themselves Reprobate," *Diary*, August 12, 1676.

<sup>17</sup> *Acta Synodi*, 135; Brandt, III, 92.

“where there are some doubts,” “which Calvin himself had not thoroughly resolved.” On the question, “how God can demand from man, whose power is finite, faith which is the work of omnipotence,” one of the Contra-remonstrants sagely remarked, “that neither Calvin nor any of our Divines had untied that knot.”<sup>18</sup> When the Hessian delegates did note a difference, it was not in the interpretation of Calvin, but a difference between the more rigid Beza and Piscator and the more liberal Ursinus and Paraeus.

The differences between Remonstrants and Contra-remonstrants at Dort were not over the Calvinistic creeds, for these were accepted by both sides; nor over teachings of Calvin which he considered essential and incorporated in his creeds and catechism. What they differed about were speculative matters which Calvin and his large-minded contemporaries had not felt it essential to include in creed or catechism: whether election and reprobation were based on faith; whether Christ died for all or only for the elect; whether grace were irresistible; whether this grace could ever be lost. On these points Calvin was not cited by the Contra-remonstrants. In many places he might have been quoted by the Remonstrants in their favor. Later, indeed, their leader Episcopius pertinently remarked that “Calvin can be opposed to Calvin, as he uses dissimilar phrases in this matter.”<sup>19</sup> It is quite true that Calvin at different times in his life and to different audiences made different statements, which might quite naturally have been quoted on either side of such speculative questions. The conception of Calvin as never varying has been rejected of recent years on the basis of more careful investigation, and this characteristic of dissimilar, even opposing, views in his teaching has been emphasized by both German and French scholars.<sup>20</sup> As has been frequently shown by Toplady, Schaff, Hunter, Scheibe, Doumergue, and as is proved by his own utterances, Calvin had not committed himself to the extreme supralapsarian posi-

<sup>18</sup> Balcanqual, in Hales, *Remains* (1659), 10, (1673 ed.), 111.

<sup>19</sup> Episcopius, *Apologia pro Declaratione Remonstrantium*, ch. v, § 64; Episcopii *Opera*, II, pt. II, 141.

<sup>20</sup> Doumergue, *Calvin*, IV, 276 f.

tion of Gomar, that the decree of reprobation preceded that of the fall. Even Gomar, champion of high Calvinism as he was, did not dare to press this point to a decision, for it was clear that on this point he could not carry either his own Calvinistic colleagues, the foreign, or the Dutch delegates. In view of the many misleading statements on the subject it is desirable to emphasize the fact that the Synod did not take a supralapsarian position, and that moreover this was not a point at issue between the Remonstrants and Contra-remonstrants. The controversy over supralapsarianism was within the ranks of the "orthodox" themselves. They eventually "huddled the matter up," so that their differences should not appear in the final decision. This took the view of fallen man (*homo lapsus*) as the subject of the decree of reprobation, a view in harmony with the earlier Calvinistic creeds and therefore acceptable to the more moderate Contra-remonstrants and to the English and other foreign delegates, who had sharply disagreed with Gomar. In opposing this view, Gomar refused to sign the statements of the other theological professors, while they in turn declared their disagreement with him. That it was Gomar and not Arminius who opposed the teaching of the Dutch church in this matter was maintained by Corvinus and Limborch, and their position is justified by the evidence both of the earlier creeds and of the action at Dort.

### III

To understand the discussions over the speculative questions at Dort, it is necessary to take up in succession the five articles submitted in 1610 by the Remonstrants, defended and further elaborated by them at Dort, and condemned *in toto* by the Synod. For the sake of clearness and at the risk of neglecting the more delicate shades of speculative theology, these five articles may be summarized as follows: (1) double predestination was conditioned on faith; (2) Christ died for all, but no one enjoys forgiveness but the believer; (3) fallen man is powerless to accomplish anything truly good until he is born again and his will renewed; (4) all good is dependent upon the grace of God, but this grace is not irresistible; (5)

grace is adequate, but it was not yet clear whether true believers can lose that grace. On this fifth article the Remonstrants at Dort went farther than in 1610, and asserted that true believers might fall away from the true faith. On the other hand they remonstrated in 1610 against the following points as contrary to the Word of God and not contained in the Dutch catechism and confession, viz.: that God predestined men without any regard to belief or unbelief; that Christ did not die for all men but only for those elected in the way indicated above; that in the elect the grace of God is irresistible; that those who have once received the true faith can never lose it wholly, of however great sins they may become guilty.

(1) In regard to the relation between faith in Christ and election, the Calvinistic creeds and catechisms had always been careful to connect the two, but had been content to describe the process as "elected in Christ," and to emphasize the need of faith. They had not sought to teach definitely whether God in predestination had or had not foreseen faith. These statements of the Calvinistic creeds the Remonstrants accepted. What they remonstrated against was the new teaching of the scholastics or Contra-remonstrants that God elected without regard to faith and obedience (Article I, §§ 1, 6, 7).

(2) Of the second article, the nature of the redemptive work of Christ, in which the Remonstrants said, "Christ died for all men and every man," "yet no one enjoys his forgiveness of sins except the believer," Calvin at times seemed to lay down a similar liberal view. "Our Lord Jesus came not to reconcile a small number of people to God his Father but wished to extend his grace to the whole world." Yet in view of other passages and interpretations Calvin cannot fairly be claimed as a clear advocate of universal redemption, and on this point again he did not take hard and fast ground.<sup>21</sup>

Even Calvin's own trusted lieutenant and successor Beza was in doubt about Calvin's meaning in his treatment of the decree of man's fall and Christ's saving work, and the subordi-

<sup>21</sup> Cf. his liberal sermon on 1 Tim. 2, 3; 5-6, in *Opera*, LIII, 161, with the more exclusive interpretation in *Commentaries* on same passage, *Opera*, LIII, 268-269. the latter in Calvin, *Commentaries*, Translation Society.

nation of this decree to that on election and reprobation, and wrote asking Calvin about this.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore no wonder that there was difference of opinion not merely between Contra-remonstrants and Remonstrants but within the Synod itself.

Whether the expression, 'Christ died for all men,' was "to be understood of all particular men or only of the elect who consist of all sorts of men, Dr. Davenant [Bishop of Salisbury] and Dr. Ward [Professor at Cambridge] are of Martinus of Bremen his mind that it is to be understood of all particular men," wrote the Scotch delegate. He himself and the two other British delegates, Carleton, Bishop of Llandaff, and Dr. Goad "take the other position."<sup>23</sup> The Hessian delegates also reported to their prince that differences on this point were more important than on any other article. The delegates from Hesse, Nassau, and Bremen, and even Sibrandus, orthodox professor of theology in Friesland, urged the necessity of the distinction maintained by Ursinus and Paraeus "between the sufficiency of Christ's death which applied to all men . . . and the efficiency thereof which . . . applies only to the elect." But "dissension with others who deserted Ursinus and Paraeus and followed Beza and Piscator" resulted in "canons on this matter conceived in general terms without prejudice to either party."<sup>24</sup> On this point the Calvinists who condemned the Remonstrants were themselves divided, some moving from the more inclusive teachings of Calvin, Ursinus and Paraeus, and the received creeds to the narrower scholastic interpretation of Piscator of Nassau and of Beza, who went so far as to restrict the message, "God so loved the world," so as to mean 'God so loved the elect,' a perversion of which Calvin was never guilty. The one thing on which the precisians were agreed was, as the Scotch delegate expressed it, their eagerness to "kill the Remonstrants"; on the question of redemption, the Remonstrants seem to have been as good Calvinists as their more rigid opponents, and saner theologians than these were. It was not

<sup>22</sup> Scheibe, Calvin's Praedestinationslehre, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Hales, Remains, ed. 1659, 2; ed. 1673, 101.

<sup>24</sup> 'Literae del. Hassiacorum,' in Niedner's Zeitschrift für historische Theologie, 1851, p. 305.

Calvinism that the Remonstrants rejected but Bezaism. Both before and after Dort, it is Beza who is criticized by the Remonstrants, not Calvin, save in very rare instances. On the other hand the rigid Contra-remonstrants were reactionary on the extent of the love of God as manifested in Christ, a matter far more critical for the future of Calvinism and Christianity than the question of exact sequence involved in man's fall and reprobation or in faith and election. These precisians tied up "high" Calvinism to Beza's narrower view that "the saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect . . . alone," and that his death should redeem "those only."<sup>25</sup>

The Remonstrants were truer to the more liberal spirit of Calvin, whose profound vision drew the following picture: "In the person of our Lord Jesus Christ we see God as it were with his arms open to receive those who seem to be separated from him; so that he fails not to hold out to us that those who today seem to be entirely deprived of the hope of salvation should return to the flock." Coupled with this stirring conception was the practical social sense that has for centuries made Calvin and his followers missionaries in every land. "Since the work of our Lord Jesus Christ extends in general to all people," "and he invites us all to him," "should we not stretch out the hand to those who know not what that union is, so that they may draw near?"<sup>26</sup> It should be remembered that Calvin was not merely jurist and professor of theology but shepherd of souls, a man who could win the coöperation of even Jeanne the baker-woman, who gave her five sous to his university of Geneva, who knew the common people in Geneva and sometimes spoke the *argot* of their market-place; and who literally made his auditors at the back of the church sit up. Trainer of other pastors, he won men of different temper and capacity from all lands to work out his program — Knox from Scotland, Peter Martyr from Italy, Germany, and England, and St. Aldegonde from the Netherlands. A teacher "with something both pastoral and priestly," he could fascinate a young blood like Beza

<sup>25</sup> Acts of Synod, 'Second Head,' Art. VIII; Schaff, I, 587.

<sup>26</sup> Sermons on 1 Tim. 2, 5-6, Opera, LIII, 161.

fresh from his erotic poems, and turn his talent and that of a Bohemian like Marot into writing the marseillaise-like Psalms of the Huguenots. He persuaded Maturin Cordier to come to teach little boys in Geneva, and for them put a sane theology into good conversational Latin. "Good morning," says one of these Genevan lads of the dialogues of "old Cordery" to his fellow pupil, "how is your mother?" "Better," says the second. "Who cured her?" "The chief Doctor." "Who is he?" "God himself." "I have no question of that, but by whose means?" "Master Sarasin's." "What remedies did he use?" "Medicines." Calvinism had not merely profound vision, it had common sense.

(3) The third article of 1610 was reaffirmed verbatim by the Remonstrants in 1618. It is such good Calvinism and has been so often misunderstood that it deserves to be quoted in full as indicating the real views of Arminius, Uytenbogaert, Episcopius, and the Dutch Remonstrants, so unlike those views of freedom of will and reliance on good works that have been so often described as Arminian.

Man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is), but it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly think, will, and effect what is truly good (*salutaria bona*).<sup>27</sup>

This sound doctrine as part of the Five Articles was condemned by the Synod of Dort as being false (Acta, I, 323). Calvin had likewise denied just this kind of "will free for good," as both he and Augustine expressed it; and had maintained that "the will is so bound by the slavery of sin that it cannot make a move toward goodness." "Whatever good is in the human will is the work of pure grace." Indeed, Calvin, while, like the Remonstrants, he denied the freedom of the will, was more liberal than they, and he foreshadows the position of Locke and Edwards, as well as illustrates his own balance and discrimination, when he says:

<sup>27</sup> Acta . . . Remonstrantium, I, 74; Schaff, Creeds, III, 546, for 1610, which appends quotation from John 15, 5.



I have no wish to fight about the matter of free will, if it is once settled that liberty ought to be referred not to the power of choosing equally good or evil but to spontaneous motion and consent;

and again:

If liberty is opposed to coercion or force, I confess and constantly assert that the will is free. If it is called free in this sense because it is not forced or violently drawn by external movement, but is led on *sua sponte*, I have no objection to this.<sup>28</sup>

(4) The fourth article of 1610 strongly emphasized the power of the grace of God, without which man cannot will any good or resist temptation, "so that all good must be ascribed to the grace of Christ." At Dort the Remonstrants strengthened this by even more explicit denial of the freedom of the will. Taken with the preceding article this seems in all fairness to clear the Remonstrants from the frequent and unjustifiable accusations that they asserted either freedom of the will or the merit of works. On the contrary, they were both Calvinist and orthodox in their emphasis on the weakness of man and on his necessity for relying on the power of God. Even in their assertion of the coöperation of grace they were not at variance with Calvin's somewhat guarded admission of coöperation. Further, the Remonstrant attitude that grace was not irresistible is in general harmony with Calvin's position that the will was not free to incline to God but was free to incline to evil; and Schweizer appears to be correct in his belief that Calvin never used the word 'irresistible' as applied to grace. Nor has the present writer found either the word or the thing embodied in any creed accepted by Calvinists as of symbolical authority, that is, adopted officially by any national church before Dort.

(5) The fifth article, which denies the perseverance of the saints, is not in opposition to any creed given symbolical authority before 1618, so far as has been discovered, with the single exception of the articles adopted by Convocation of the Irish Episcopal Church, 1615 (Articles 37, 38), and Schweizer

<sup>28</sup> Calvin, *Serv. et Lib. Hum. Arbit.*, and in his *De Lib. Arbit.*, quoted in Cunningham, *Reformers*, 498; Citations from Locke and Edwards, 498, 487. Cf. *Institutes*, II, iii, 5, 6, 13, 14, and II, ii, 26. See Locke, *Works*, 1751 edition, III, 487.



is again apparently correct in his general denial that Calvin ever uses the word 'inamissible,' that is, declares that grace could not be lost.<sup>29</sup>

On the twin points of general redemption and perseverance of believers (Articles III and V), the possibility of showing Calvin in sympathy with the broader view was strikingly shown in the seventeenth century by two liberal Calvinists. Moses Amyrault, pupil of the Scottish John Cameron, at first a lawyer but converted to theology through Calvin's Institutes and later professor at the Huguenot university of Saumur, liberalized Calvin's teaching and yet preserved both it and himself within the limits of orthodoxy. He was able to meet the objections of his colleagues, and at the Huguenot synods to escape the fate of the Arminians in Holland, partly because he was somewhat less radical and made out a strong case through quoting Calvin himself, partly, it is probable, because in France no political reason called for the action demanded by the dominant political party in Holland. In sermons, pamphlets, and books written in defence of Calvin's doctrines of predestination, reprobation, universal grace, and also of particular grace, Amyrault brings out in scores of felicitously (and fairly) selected passages that Calvin "followed a *via media* and taught a universal grace which called all men to faith and repentance. Another grace which prepares men's spirits and affects them he makes peculiar to the elect."<sup>30</sup> He quotes from Calvin, chiefly from the Commentaries, scores of passages showing first that Calvin did teach the general redemptive purpose of God in Christ. Among these are the following sentences:

God desired that all people should share in his mercy and salvation.

The justice which is necessary to salvation extends to all the world.

God offers salvation indifferently to all the world.<sup>31</sup>

Jesus offers salvation indifferently to all and benignly extends his arms to all in order that all may have greater courage to repent.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> A. Schweizer, *Glaubenslehre der Evangel. Ref. Kirchen*, 1847, II, 123, 124.

<sup>30</sup> *Doctrinae de Gratia Particulari ut a Calvino explicatur defensio*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Calvin's Commentaries, Ezekiel 23, 32, quoted in Amyrault's *Eschantillon de la doctrine de Calvin touchant la prédestination*, Saumur, 1636, bound with *Six Sermons . . . de l'Évangile*.

<sup>32</sup> Amyrault, *ibid.*, quoting Calvin's Commentaries, John, ch. 12; same expression used repeatedly by Calvin, e.g. Commentaries, Ezekiel, ch. 15; 18, 21-22; cf. above on 1 Tim. 2, 5-6.

Then, however, Amyraut quotes Calvin's Commentaries showing that while God calls all men, and Jesus died for all men, yet the condition of salvation was faith and that this was knit with predestination. But this doctrine (in such close harmony with the Remonstrants) was presented by Amyraut in the form of quotations from Calvin, and in such wise that he did not run counter to Calvin's sequence in faith and election. He does bring out sharply that Calvin taught a conditional rather than an absolute decree, in the sense that the decree was conditional upon faith and in that respect not absolute. Calvin in his *Treatise on Predestination*, 1552, had pointed out that just as God had threatened to punish the Ninevites and the Egyptian kings, and yet forgave and remitted punishment when they ceased to be rebels, even though his threat had appeared to be absolute and irrevocable,

so in the reverse case the promises which invite all men to salvation do not determine precisely what God has determined in his secret council, but that which he is ready and willing to do for those who are brought to faith and repentance.

The question is not whether Jesus Christ is come into the world to purge the sins of the whole world, for that is indisputable, but how this belief is to be reconciled with the contrary, that he is come that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

None can participate in Christ unless he has been adopted and chosen of God to be of his children.

Although the reconciliation made by him is offered to all, it is a special privilege of the elect to be gathered into hope of life.<sup>33</sup>

Another significant attempt to show that Calvin taught general redemption was made on a similar basis of quotations from Calvin by the Puritan divine John Goodwin, whose book in defence of the execution of Charles I was ordered to be burnt by the Oxford decree of 1683 in company with nearly thirty other Calvinistic writings. Goodwin was accused of Arminianism, but always denied it and quotes "many full and clear testimonies of their truthfulness [the doctrines of general redemption, and of the possibility of true believers falling away] from the pen of Calvin himself." Goodwin convincingly shows

<sup>33</sup> From Calvin's *Traité de la prédestination*, without specific reference, quoted by Amyraut, Eschantillon, ed. 1658, 209, 211 f. Latin text in *Calvini Opera*, VIII, 300 f., 336.

that all, Calvin and Remonstrants and Contra-remonstrants, were not absolutely consistent, but at times approached one another. Where he himself approaches the Remonstrants, he holds that if his "opinion be Arminian," the ancient fathers and writers of the Christian church were generally Arminian; "yea that Calvin himself had had many pangs of Arminianism (at times) upon him; yea that the Synod of Dort itself was not free from the infection."<sup>34</sup> Goodwin, at a time when he was unquestionably a Calvinist, and had not been even accused of Arminianism, made a fine Calvinistic plea for not rejecting truth on the ground that it was new, any more than for rejecting belief that there was "an America on the ground that it had been so long unknown." He held with John Robinson "that not all scripture had yet delivered their treasure."

As to the question whether grace was resistible or irresistible, the orthodox Calvinist Paraeus advised the Synod to relegate it to the Jesuits, the authors of the distinction.<sup>35</sup> Even in the Synod itself the orthodox member Sibrandus stated that on this point "there were some doubts which Calvin himself had not thoroughly satisfied."<sup>36</sup>

It is not meant by these examples to attempt to prove that the Remonstrants went on all fours with Calvin, for not even the 'orthodox' Beza, Piscator, or Gomar did that. The point is that on these speculative matters where the Remonstrants objected to new and rigid scholastic definitions, Calvin and the accepted Calvinistic creeds had not attempted to pronounce definitively. Consequently in 1618 each side might have fairly regarded itself as Calvinistic, and might be so regarded today.

If anyone finds the inclusive view of Calvinism taken in this article vague and indiscriminating, so that he would still cling to double predestination as a more distinctive test, then by the same token the Remonstrants are Calvinists on the basis of the official statements presented at Dort and of the books of their leaders Episcopius and Limborch. At Dort the Remonstrants, more fearlessly 'orthodox' than their opponents

<sup>34</sup> *Redemption Redeemed*, Preface, signatures c3<sup>vo</sup> cr4<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Hales, *Letters*, ed. 1659, 16-17; ed. 1673, 120.

<sup>36</sup> Hales, *Letters*, ed. 1659, 10.

on this point, insisted on discussing the two sides of double predestination for the following reasons:

Because it certainly tends much to the honor of God to think, speak, and write with truth concerning the severity of his justice, which is manifest in the business of reprobation, as well as of his mercy, which appears by his election.

Because threatenings (which are the most effectually drawn from the decree of reprobation) are no less useful and necessary to deter the hearts of men from sin, than even those comforts that are derived from the doctrine of election.

Because . . . neither have those famous men Johannes Calvinus, Beza, Zanchius, Sturmius, Piscator, and abundance more ever made any scruple of speaking their minds freely upon this point. (Brandt, III, 92, 'Reasons,' 2, 3, 6.)

If the objection be made that the Remonstrants were not Calvinistic because they denied 'absolute' decrees, it is necessary to define the Remonstrants' meaning from their own statements rather than from their opponents' accusations; and then to compare their statements with what Calvin felt it essential to put into creeds. The Remonstrants did not deny an absolute decree in the sense of denying the absolute sovereignty of God or the unchangeableness of the decree. Their first Article of 1610, like the later teachings of their leader Limborch (so heartily approved by John Locke), taught that God had decreed "by an eternal unchangeable purpose" to elect, but that this decree was conditioned on faith. In their own words, reaffirming and interpreting this article to the Synod, "the decree of God touching the salvation or perdition of every man is not an absolute decree of an end *without regard to any good or evil*," "*without respect to their unbelief or disobedience*."<sup>37</sup> Calvin himself, as Amyraut so fully proved, taught a decree conditioned on faith and in that sense not absolute. It is true that the Remonstrants in the question of the causal relation between faith and predestination did not agree with all of Calvin's writings; but they were quite in harmony with all Calvin thought it necessary to put into creed or catechism, or with what stood in the other Calvinistic creeds of the Scotch

<sup>37</sup> Brandt, II, 83-84, Art. I, §§ 2-6; Limborch's teaching "of Predestination both to Salvation and Damnation," *Theologia Christiana*, ed. 1700, Bk. IV, ch. i, §§ 5-6, p. 296, translated by Jones in *Compleat System*, Bk. IV, ch. i (II, 343).

and Dutch, and in the Heidelberg Catechism, with their constantly repeated phrase of "election in Christ." It was, then, in the sense of a decree conditioned on faith in Christ — a good Calvinistic doctrine — that the Remonstrants spoke of conditional rather than absolute decrees. Furthermore their object was to subserve God's honor, not to limit it.

If one contrasts Calvin's more simple, tolerant, and evangelical theology in his creeds, catechisms, sermons and the first edition of the *Institutes*, with the somewhat more technical and exclusive treatment in the *Commentaries* and the later editions of the *Institutes*, and then compares Calvin's two treatments with the statements of the two parties at Dort, it becomes clear that the Contra-remonstrant, or ultra-conservative, party was over-emphasizing the scholastic and more exclusive element in Calvin. The Remonstrants, the liberal party, were on the whole, with the inevitable revaluations after reinvestigation, following the liberating tendencies shown in Calvin, more markedly in his earlier writings. Different sides of Calvinism were emphasized by the two parties on points like general redemption, resistibility of grace, perseverance, where Calvin and the accepted Calvinistic creeds before Dort had wisely refrained from drawing hard and fast lines; and where Calvin and his disciples might be quoted with considerable fairness by each of two different parties, both by the rigid and by the liberal.

On the subject of the supralapsarian or sublapsarian view Calvin never "gave a formal and explicit deliverance" so that "neither party is entitled to claim him as an actual adherent." "He rather put aside these speculations and insisted on the great doctrine of predestination on which all Calvinists agreed."<sup>38</sup> When Calvin discussed predestination, even with the inner circle, the ministers of Geneva, he advised them to remember

that the councils and secrets of God are depths into which it is not profitable to plunge,

Let us be content with the Scripture.

<sup>38</sup> Cunningham, *Reformers*, 358. Similar views in Hunter, *Teaching of Calvinism*, 122; Toplady, *Historic Proof of the Calvinism of the Church of England*, I, 161.

Without presuming to enquire what God had ordained before the creation of the world, let us follow solely what is said in Scripture.

In general we must recognize that God governs by his Providence all things in such wise that his will is as it were the course of all.<sup>39</sup>

In accordance with this sound principle, Calvin everywhere insisted on God's providence and used the phrase "election in Christ," no less Calvinistic because it is scriptural. If we follow Calvin, who on such speculative matters as came up at Dort declined to take exclusive ground in creed or catechism, we should include as Calvinists both Remonstrants and Contra-remonstrants. Calvin himself went so far as to publish with commendatory preface Melancthon's *Loci communes*, although, as Grotius pointed out, he differed from them on the points of controversy between the Remonstrants and the Contra-remonstrants.<sup>40</sup>

If Calvinism had actually insisted upon only one view of all theological questions, no room could have been found for the liberal theologian Perrot in Geneva, for Paraeus in Heidelberg, for Amyrault in France; and equally little for the conservatives Trochin and Turretini in Geneva or Piscator in Nassau. In fact, both the conservative and liberal interpretations could be and were drawn from the national church creeds, and were permitted until 1618, when a peculiar political and personal situation, united with theological bitterness, forced an unnatural decision. On this earlier, sounder basis the Calvinists of South Holland had urged that matters against Piscator be "not driven on with such heats" by the French; and Duplessis Mornay, the "Huguenot pope," persuaded both Piscator's follower Dan Tilenus and his opponent Peter Du Moulin to own each other as orthodox. If Calvinism had meant simply the narrower interpretation, the good Calvinist Du Moulin would not have advocated tacitly passing by many things, "such as is the controversy moved by Piscator and many nice opinions proposed by Arminius concerning free will, the perseverance of the saints, and predestination"; nor would that equally good

<sup>39</sup> *Congrégation sur l'élection éternelle de Dieu*, 1551, Opera, VIII, 110-111, 115. Cf. Cunningham, 366.

<sup>40</sup> Brandt, II, 212.

Calvinist Paraeus have "placed the articles of a divine predestination its cause and effects, and the nature of free will, not among the fundamentals of our faith but among those decisions about which men may disagree without breach of peace or charity."

These instances, cited by Grotius in his noble plea for comprehension and toleration addressed to the magistrates of Amsterdam in 1616, show historic Calvinism before Dort to have been comprehensive enough to cover both the liberal and the conservative. Even Jurieu, the paragon of stiff Calvinistic orthodoxy, admitted that the Synod of Dort did not regard the tenets there in question as necessary to salvation or as necessarily banishing from the Church of Christ. And the same comprehensive and tolerant attitude was manifested in the action of the Dutch authorities, until Maurice for political reasons took sides with the Contra-remonstrants.<sup>41</sup> Limborch, the later leader of the Remonstrants, shows that supporters of predestination conditioned on faith, were always teaching, preaching, and writing, basing their doctrine on the Dutch national creed; and that both they and their opponents were tolerated until the Synod of Dort.<sup>42</sup> Before 1618 one looks in vain for any accepted national creed incorporating the exclusive teachings of this Synod. Nor were the Synod's decisions accepted as possessing symbolical authority by other national churches, with the single exception of the Huguenots; so that, as Rogge has pointed out, the Dutch from 1619 on were distinguished from other Calvinistic churches by the peculiar character of their creed. The Dutch Reformed Church in America wisely omits from its standards the rejection of errors and the sentence against the Remonstrants.

In worship, church and civil government, education, social and economic program, even more than in theology, the Calvinism of Calvin and his contemporaries was marked by an adaptability which enabled it to become an international movement.

As in church government and worship, so also in civil government Calvin did not hold persistently to one form. After

<sup>41</sup> Brandt, II, 211-213.

<sup>42</sup> Hist. pred. cont. in Holland., III, 4.



his wider experience in Geneva and Strassburg he made, as time went on, definite changes in government of both church and state looking toward a larger representative element. His working test in all these matters was that of "edification," which meant to the Calvinist the building up of the kingdom of God, not merely an appeal to the senses. Always there was the supreme test of maintaining God's will, his sovereignty, his Word. There might be the largest variety in worship or government of church or state, for the sake of adaptation to time, place, and people; with only one reservation constantly found incorporated in Calvinistic creed or catechism. In Geneva magistrate and simple citizen alike swore with uplifted hands to obey their own elected representatives "so far as is possible without offending God" and "in all statutes and ordinances which do not contravene the commandments of God."<sup>43</sup> The ministers swore obedience to law and magistrates with like acknowledgment of God's supreme sovereignty: "to serve rulers and people in all ways that shall not debar me from rendering to God the service which I owe him in my calling," . . . "without prejudice to the liberty which we have of teaching as God commands us."<sup>44</sup> So in worship decency and order were to be observed, and practical means like singing to lift up the soul to God, but there must be "no laws and constitutions made to bind the conscience, to oblige the faithful to things not commanded by God, to establish any other service of God than what he demands, or to bind to anything tending to break Christian liberty." Such was the creed of this first Puritan republic.<sup>45</sup>

It is in such provisions as these that one catches the early liberalizing promise of Calvin and Calvinism, the larger hope, and the seeds of tolerance. Checked for a time by bitterness and disputes, and the militant spirit inseparable from a period of peril and war, the gentler and more liberal spirit sought an outlet under men like the Remonstrants, whom the too rigid Calvinists of the seventeenth century failed to recognize as true spiritual sons of Calvin and Geneva.

<sup>43</sup> 'Confession,' 1537, Opera, IX, 700.

<sup>45</sup> Opera, X, 1698.

<sup>44</sup> Opera, X, 32.



The Remonstrants in their very assertion of the duty of thinking for themselves, holding to the Scripture, maintaining the honor of God, and guarding the morals of their fellow-citizens against false reliance upon irresistibility of grace and perseverance of the saints, were Calvinists. Even in their reluctance to be bound by scholastic dogma and their assertion of the rights of conscience, they were like Calvin in his earlier period and in his creed, catechism, and ordinances for Geneva and his noble plea for Christian liberty of conscience. "No necessity must be laid on consciences in matters in which Christ has made them free." "Constitutions enacted for the purpose of binding the conscience inwardly before God" Calvin expressly condemned. The same position is taken by the Remonstrant leader Episcopius.<sup>46</sup> It is of even more vital significance that the passage of Calvin's Institutes on Christian Liberty, beginning, "when once the conscience is entangled in the net, it enters a long and inextricable labyrinth from which it is afterwards most difficult to escape," was quoted in full by Limborch, leader of the Remonstrants and Locke's friend and correspondent.<sup>47</sup> In this same book, Limborch (whom Locke rejoices to find "a theologian to whom I am not a heretic") shows the Remonstrants two generations after Dort still explicitly teaching the Calvinistic "two parts of predestination, one regarding those to be saved and the other regarding those to be damned." Limborch (like Calvin) regards "the demonstration of the glory of God as the end of predestination, of the decree of reprobation as well as of election"; and "the disproportion wherein God is pleased to communicate salvation to men," and dispenses his grace without respect to qualifications of persons, "as incomprehensible mysteries to be adored but not to be scrutinized (*adoranda mysteria nobis imperscrutabilia*) and depending upon the mere good pleasure of God."<sup>48</sup> Limborch's book also quotes Calvin's teaching regarding the lack of merit in man, and the merit of Christ as dependent

<sup>46</sup> See his *Confessio Remonstrantium*, c. XV, xxiii; *Opera Theologica*, II, 88, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, III, xix, 7, quoted by Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, ed. 1695, V, liv, 14, p. 554. See Locke's letter to Limborch, 10th May, 1695, in *Familiar Letters*, Works, fol. ed. 1759, III, 595.; ed. 1812, X, 46-47.

<sup>48</sup> *Theologia Christiana ad praxin pietatis*, IV, i, §§ 5-6, 15-16.

solely upon the grace of God; and follows closely Calvin's arguments in defence of usury.<sup>49</sup>

Calvin, the liberal Calvinists at Dort, their later leader and scholar Limborch, and the success of the experiment in toleration in Holland are links in the hitherto almost unrecognized chain of toleration which, in spite of weaknesses and apparent breaks, comes down from the earlier and more liberal Calvin through the liberal Calvinists, not only those of Holland but also those, like Roger Williams in America, Claude in France, in England Vane, Goodwin, Milton, at Oxford John Owen, Lewis Du Moulin, and their pupil John Locke, in whom all the liberal elements in Calvinism — Puritan, Huguenot, Remonstrant — crystallized and passed over to America. In the Calvinistic Netherlands, from the time of William the Silent, there was a tolerance, sometimes checked, as at Dort, but nowhere else carried out so early or on so broad a scale. Toleration marched along with the remarkable burst of intellectual, artistic, social, and political life in the Netherlands that culminated in the first half of the seventeenth century and made the Calvinistic United Provinces not merely the artistic and scholarly centre of Europe, but the greatest commercial and colonial power of that day, until she was outdistanced by another Puritan commonwealth, her rival across the English Channel.

At Dort, under a temporary abandonment of their characteristic tolerance, both sides went beyond Calvin, and debated, with a bitterness and personal animosity that disgusted the foreign delegates, over questions as to which the larger-minded Calvin had recognized finite limitations in discussing the problems of the infinite.

The modern scholar will be apt to agree with the Estates of Holland and with Grotius, who, speaking in their name in 1608, held that between Arminius and Gomar, or between Remonstrant and Contra-remonstrant, "there was no considerable difference."<sup>50</sup> Arminius himself held that "the points in con-

<sup>49</sup> Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, III, xxi, 9, quoting from Calvin's *Institutes*, III, xvii, 1, on Usury, Bk. V, ch. xxxviii, §§ 27-31. (English translation by Jones, V, xvi, 1. Cf. *Calvini Opera*, X, 245-249.)

<sup>50</sup> 1608, Brandt, II, 47; 1611, 93; 1616, 208 f.

trovery between him and Gomar were not so numerous as they had been represented; that he had always confined himself within the Confession of the Dutch churches, and was still desirous to adhere to it.”<sup>51</sup> Grotius, in an official attempt of Calvinistic magistrates to persuade men to tolerance and peace, rightly emphasized the positive contributions which each side was making rather than the denials of sound doctrine which each side somewhat sophistically put into the mouths of opponents in order to condemn them. This scholar and advocate of Holland said:

The design of the Contra-remonstrants is that we should ascribe the origin of our salvation entirely to the mercy of God, exclusive of all merits. Who can find fault with it? The meaning of the Remonstrants is that no person ought by us to be entirely deprived of the hope of salvation. This the Contra-remonstrants do not oppose.

The Contra-remonstrants seek to guard against all despair; . . . the Remonstrants to draw people off from carelessness.<sup>52</sup>

A member of the Synod felicitously described the Remonstrants as *canonici irregulares*, ‘irregular regulars.’ His humor was so dry that an outsider like Hales “failed to see the sap of this wit,” and was surprised that it so deeply amused “even the gravest of the Synod.” If one may venture to probe a joke three hundred years old, the Synod saw that their indiscreet brother had blurted out the truth, and that the Remonstrants whom they were already prepared to condemn were nothing but “irregular regulars.”

Fundamental difference of doctrine was not the real ground for the excommunication and banishment of the Remonstrants. The reason for expulsion from both church and country appears as one studies the development of the struggle before 1618 and the story of the sessions of the Synod. It was a family quarrel, and the reason why the liberal and conservative Calvinists could not get on in the same church and nation was like that of own brothers in such a case: they had too many points of contact.

In Holland the points of contact between the “brothers badly split by prejudice,” as John Owen described them, were

<sup>51</sup> Nichols, *Arminius' Works*, I, 522.

<sup>52</sup> Brandt, II, 227, Grotius to Magistrates of Amsterdam, 1616.

these: a strongly personal phase of theological and academic rivalry between Arminius and Gomar; a political antagonism, personal in its nature, between Grotius and Barneveldt on the one side and Maurice on the other; a foreign question which involved the relations with Spain and also the desirability of keeping on good terms with James I, who urged the prosecution of the Remonstrants, and as Defender of the Faith threatened to take joint action with other Reformed churches if the Netherlands did not act; and an internal difference on the matter of the centralization of power in the House of Orange when the latter was facing diminished influence upon the cessation of war and war-powers. Under the Remonstrant leader Barneveldt the whole question in its combined political, religious, and personal phases was so vital to the safety of Holland that a revolution seemed to threaten. There was some violence on the part of the Remonstrants in Holland; the Contra-remonstrant ministers in that province were ousted from their pulpits; and the Estates ordered their soldiers to transfer their allegiance from the national to the provincial government. The Remonstrants even began to levy troops of their own. Prince Maurice therefore concluded that Barneveldt and his adherents, political and religious, were dangerous; and after the manner of the House of Orange he struck hard. In addition to the evidence of political influence quoted in the contemporary letters of Hales and Balcanqual, Brandt quotes other evidence of political pressure at the instance of the Remonstrants which should probably be viewed with more caution. Certainly, however, some weight must attach to the criticism of the Contra-remonstrant delegate Martinus of Bremen: "The Synod is nothing more than a political farce or comedy, in which the statesmen act the chief part." The orthodox delegate Goclenius, the *enfant terrible* who confessed the Remonstrants to be "irregular regulars," again blurted out the truth when he apologized for his conservatism on the ground that "we find that the prince and the state will have it so."<sup>53</sup>

The civil magistrate will suffer none to appear on the council but such as approve their doctrine,

<sup>53</sup> Brandt, III, 283, 211.

wrote the tolerant Calvinist Lewis Du Moulin, Locke's Puritan Professor of History at Oxford;

That is what the sovereign power did very prudently in the Low Countries when they summoned a Synod at Dort.

The fathers of that Synod were not impartial . . . but were both judges and parties of favorers of one side, and consequently the Arminians could not but lose their cause before such a tribunal.<sup>54</sup>

The answer to the question who were Calvinists at the Synod of Dort is that both Remonstrants and Contra-remonstrants were Calvinists, but of different schools, the former liberal and progressive, the latter conservative, scholastic, and rigid. "Both are right in what they admit, both are wrong in what they deny," is the judicious conclusion of Schaff.<sup>55</sup> The distinction between the two schools of Calvinists is made with more assurance since it is for substance admitted by four modern historians. In Geneva, Dr. Choisy — like Calvin, both pastor and professor — concludes his scholarly study of the Calvinistic Christian state at Geneva in the time of Beza with these remarks:

It is necessary to distinguish carefully between the Calvinism of Calvin and that of the end of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. The Calvinism most truly Calvinistic is that of the first edition of the Institutes and of the Catechism (p. 554).

Professor Borgeaud, to whom all students of Calvinism owe grateful indebtedness, has in his monumental history of the University of Geneva an illuminating passage on the reactionary theology of the successors of Beza, typified by the Genevan delegates to Dort ("*les épigones*," "*l'intransigeance dogmatique*"); and suggests the other side in his description of the liberal Perrot, teacher and counsellor of Arminius and Uytenbogaert (I, 337–338, 158). Blok, most distinguished and sober of modern Dutch historians, says:

Calvinism was divided from the earliest days of its appearance in Holland. In the Synods the precisians and the liberals, different fundamentally in character, were already ranged into parties.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Paraenesis, ch. xxiii, paragraph 7.

<sup>55</sup> History of the Christian Church, VII, 815.

<sup>56</sup> Hist. Netherlands, II, ch. xxiv, p. 398.

The view of the Arminians as “a party in the state rather than a sect in the church” is confirmed by such a detached and judicious observer as Sir William Temple, who resided in Holland in 1672.<sup>57</sup> In America, that critically-minded investigator Professor C. A. Briggs, observes:

The Calvinistic symbols do not make the mistake of the theologians of Switzerland and Holland. The scholastic theologians of Switzerland and Holland perverted these precious doctrinal achievements of Calvinism into hard, stern, and barren dogmas by emphasizing their formal, technical, and merely external character.

In the Arminian conflict the scholastics were the bitter foes of Arminianism, and they went to such extremes of logical deduction that they sought to exclude from orthodoxy those who were more orthodox than themselves. They divided the Calvinistic camp into two parties, scholastic Calvinists and moderate Calvinists.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever view be held as to what was the most essential principle of Calvinism, there should no longer be any doubt in the mind of historical scholars that the Dutch liberals like Arminius, Episcopius, Limborch, and their adherents, were historically a part of the great international Calvinistic movement in worship, church government and discipline, political theory, social and economic program—even in theology as embodied in the national creeds of the sixteenth century, a movement which can be traced back to the Institutes of Calvin and the institutions of the little republic of Geneva, the first example of that Puritan idea of a Commonwealth which spread through Holland, England, and Scotland to the New World.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Observations upon United Provinces,’ ch. vi, Works, 1731, I, 58.

<sup>58</sup> American Presbyterianism, 24.